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The pilgrim's vision

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THE PILGRIM AT EVENTIDE.

THE
PILGRIM'S VISION

An Allegory

Miller, Minnie (Willis) Baines, 1845

BY

MINNIE WILLIS BAINES

AUTHOR OF

"THE SILENT LAND," "HIS COUSIN, THE DOCTOR," ETC.



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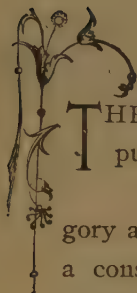
to

My Sister Julia,

A Christian Pilgrim Consistently Walking
in the Narrow Way.

44594

PROLOGUE.



THE "Pilgrim's Vision" explains its own purpose and excuse for being.

The characters introduced in this Allegory are among those which are disturbing, to a considerable extent, the faith of a certain class of believers in the Christian Church of to-day. I expect neither to wound nor bruise the Philistine giants indicated, with these "smooth stones out of the brook." My design in hurling them is to attract attention to the fact that they are agents of such disquietude, in the hope that, by so doing, I may deter some bewildered souls from becoming their prisoners, and being carried off to their "Doubting Castles."

M. W. B.

SPRINGFIELD, O., 1891.

EITHER the Worker did in ancient days,
Give us the word, his tale of love and might,
(And if, in truth, He gave it us, who says
He did not give it right?)

Or else He gave it not, and then indeed
We know not if *He is*, by whom our years
Are portioned—who the orphan moons doth lead,
And the unfathered spheres.

.
How would it make the weight and wonder less,
If lifted from immortal shoulders down,
The worlds were cast on seas of emptiness,
In realms without a crown?

And (if there were no God) were left to rue
Dominion of the air and of the fire?
Then, if there be a God, "Let God be true,
And every man a liar."

.
*Far better, in its place, the lowliest bird
Should sing aright to Him the lowliest song,
Than that a seraph strayed should take the word,
And sing his glory wrong.*

—JEAN INGELOW.



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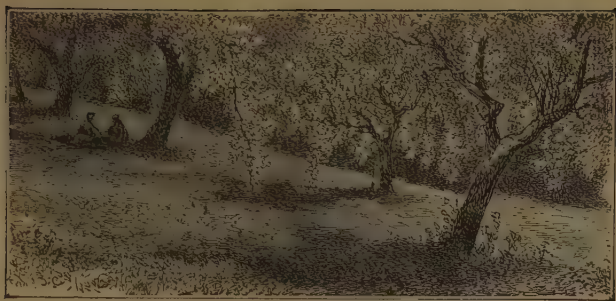
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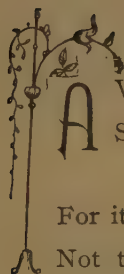
Illustration.

I.

The Pilgrim at Eventide.



THE PILGRIM'S VISION.



WEARY pilgrim, as the sun went down,
Sighed thankfully to know the day was
past;

For it had been to her all cheerlessness.

Not that the light had been with clouds ob-
scured;

Nor storms, with wailing voices, swept the land ;

Nor mighty winds, held captive in their lairs,

Waked from their slumbers, shook their clanking
chains,

And, breaking from their bondage, cast themselves
In fury on, and ravaged all the earth.

Not this. The day, to look upon, had been
Most fair. 'T was to the beauty-loving eye
As music to the ear soothed by its sound,
'T was turquoise sky, up which the sun had wheeled
His jeweled chariot, every shining spoke
Within its whirling disks ablaze with light.
The earth, which met it, at that far-off rim
Where they unite in one, and softly blend,
Each with the other, like a flexured gem,
Blue, shading to a softer blue, that pales
And fades, in turn, to blue impearled with gray,
Was earth at loveliest, in balmy spring.

Fringed were her hillsides with the new-grown grass,
That caught the violet in tangling leash;
And on the trees the crinkled yellow leaves
Held their creased foliage out to zephyr-loves
To blow it smooth and wide and beautiful.
In clefts of rocks the honeysuckle bloomed;
Grew fronds of ferns and myriad sweet things,
Hardy and wild and of erratic growth.
The flying birds fanned all the air with wings
So swift they sped like arrows on their way,

With changeful glints of red and yellow play,
And flashes fugitive, that did combine
Blue blent with green, and green that verged on
blue ;

Red reappeared, and struck to Tyrian hue.
Thus ran their wings the gamut of the light.
Their songs like memories of vanished joys,
Whene'er their chansons did some pause beguile,
Touched minor chords within her heart, that rang
Like merry echo's distance-mellowed sound,
Which, though it joyful strikes the pulsing air,
Grows strange and hollow in its weird rebound ;
With other spirit touches waiting ears.
In its fair bed, to which the moss crept down,
From which the cress threw up its white star-flower,
The river rippled on in silver curves,
Laved water-lilies bursting from the bud,
And kissed, in passing, isles of reed and sedge.
Fair Nature's graces had the hours disclosed :
Why, then, rejoice at setting of the sun ?

Ah ! there was that within her being deep
That answered to each touch, in earth and sky,

Of beauty, and the speech its imagery
Impresses on the soul in language high!—
Answered, and struggled with strong throes to rend
The power of place and circumstance that held
Her bound, and rise to altitudes ideal,
That, with their grand suggestions, wooed her on.
And as it answered these diviner calls
That thrilled her to such agonized desire,
O, how she loathed her lower life's demands,
The fetters that they fitted to her limbs,
And manacles to her rebellious hands!

Upon life's flowery uplands she beheld
Great palace walls, within whose massive piles,
'Twixt arch and column, under sculptured frieze,
The crystal casements glittered in the sun;
Green-tendriled vineyard rows that promised grapes,
And gardens with their breaths of mingled balms.
Swift equipages, there, went to and fro,
With mettled steeds that, flying, spurned the earth,
Their shining harness rich with touch of gold.
And there were throngs of people, like the flowers,
More gloriously than Solomon arrayed,

In silken vesture and in jewels rare,
Bright with reflection of the sunbeam's rays.
And little children led they by the hand,
With dusky tresses crowned, or golden hair.
And on the uplands, where they idly strayed,
No shadow fell, nor storm-cloud cast its gloom.
And there were homes. O, how the pilgrim's heart
Throbb'd in her bosom at the thought of home;
Name next to heaven in sweetness and in power,
And in potential happiness and good!
And in these homes were daughters dear, and sons,
Fulfilling all the promise of their youth;
And blissful circles 'round the festal board,
And at the fireside, woke the gladsome laugh,
Or summoned to the lips the tenderer smile.
And there was music; voices tuned to song;
And love and sympathy, divinest gift
That human heart to human heart can yield.
The light and music and the consciousness
Of all this joy, whose brimming draught held not
One drop of all its overflow for her,
Upon the pilgrim smote with painful stroke,
Like smarting touch upon a wound unhealed.

For all that she had ever known of home
Was but a memory of a by-gone past ;
A heap of ashes from a fire long spent ;
A mournful repetition of a sound
Grown still, that through the chambers of her heart
And from sharp angles of her stony grief,
By day and night, went ever echoing on.
Her sons and daughters? There were long, green
 graves
That evidenced what narrow space of earth,
In opening, may engulf the hopes of time.
And there were names, upon the marble cut,
That Love had chiseled deeper in her heart
Than mason's knife could ever grave on stone.
If Life with Death fond fellowship might hold ;
Her vigil keep beneath the cypress shade ;
Dwell evermore beside the long green graves !

But Duty beckoned with remorseless hand,
And Care said: "None may lay my burden down,
Until, within celestial gates, it slips
And falls away from shoulders that are winged.
So from the cypress shadows she had passed,

Albeit those shadows lay upon her soul,
And took the path of pilgrimage that stretched
In cheerless course beneath her troubled eyes.
'T was a long road, and through its blistering dust
The pointed flints found contact with her feet,
And, piercing, pained them.

On this thoroughfare
Did thousands walk, each selfishly shut up
Within his own perplexities and woes.
Of kindred birth, these tribulations all,
Yet alien, in the one relating touch
Of comprehensive feeling, each for each.
Unique each man's, in being his very own;
Exclusive to his sole experience;
Interpretative to himself alone,
And making separate atmosphere, in which
Each pilgrim lived and moved and thought and
felt;
Wherein each dwelt in state of ceaseless siege
That made him blind and deaf to others' ruth.

Beside this highway scanty herbage grew,
And branches few protecting covert made

From fierce and fervent rays of scorching sun.
When, at long distances, a fountain leaped,
Or from the earth a turbid pool up-welled,
Whose waters were but liquid bitterness,
Leader nor prophet from their midst came forth,
With tree or salt, to turn it sweet for them.
And on the level distance beat the sun;
Upon their heads and faces beat the sun,
In steady, stern, and all-revealing light,
That left no refuge for a lurking hope
That better than it seemed might be the way.

And yet there was a shadow to refresh,
Which, when the pilgrim's spirit weariest felt,
And most opprest, if she but upward looked,
Seemed hovering o'er her like a restful cloud,
E'en when trees were infrequent, and the hills
Their grateful shadowy semblance had withdrawn.
It seemed a form all vague and nebulous,
In shape and contour like unto a cross—
A half-imagined thing when first perceived;
But as the pilgrim longer on it gazed,
She saw it darken, as the darkling air

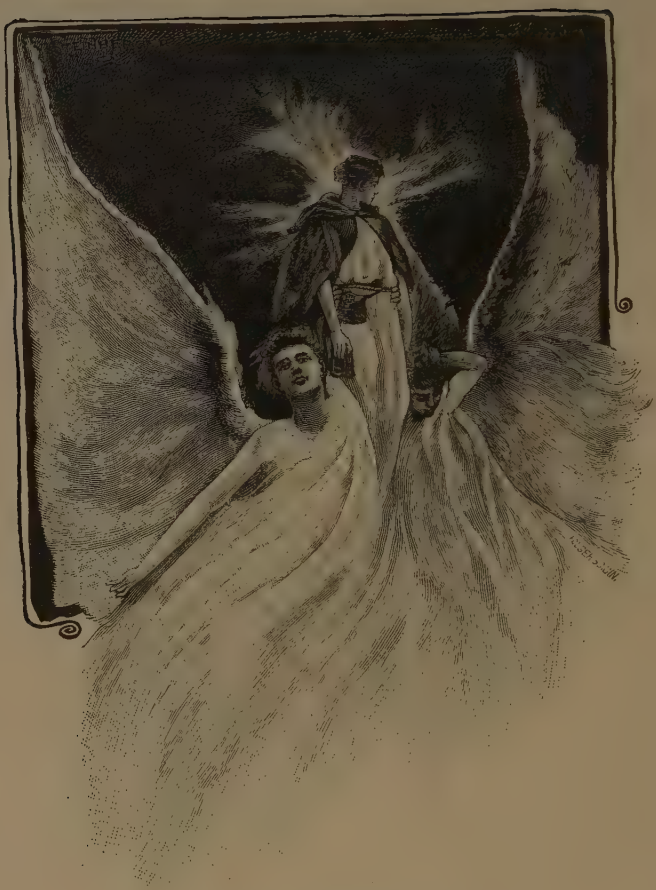
In purple distance, cool and soft and calm,
That floods the pass between two mountain peaks,
And seems a very gateway into heaven.
And on its summit grew a silver light,
As white and clear as the pure light of truth,
Whose rays, converging, formed a royal crown,
Which, as it were, seemed woven out of thorns,
Whose every point like diamond facets shone,
As if each separate thorn impaled a gem.
And on its arms, and at its mighty base,
Were scarlet lilies lavishly entwined,
Each brilliant goblet filled with globules red,
Whose perfume scented all the earth and air.
And when the pilgrim saw this deepening shade,
This growing crown, these scarlet-chaliced flowers,
She felt no more the weariness and pain;
No longer thirsted in a desert way;
No more went sorrowing for a dear, dead past.
For, as she gazed, those lengthening shadowy arms
Reached down and clasped and folded all her life,
Uplifting it to nobler bliss than earth's
Intensest joys and pleasures comprehend;
She seemed to understand those mystic words,

"For ye are dead, and hid with Christ in God."
So, when the sun into the west went down,
And the day's journey to its end had drawn,
And the gray twilight glimmered to its close,
She sat down, meekly, on the scanty grass,
Withdrawn a little from the dusty way,
And sighed a thankful sigh that one more day
Into the vast eternity was gone.

Nearer, by one day's journey, had she come
To Him who hung upon that crowned cross ;
Nearer to that far city where they dwelt,
Beyond the hinged pearls of those lustrous gates,
Who left her here, so desolate and forlorn,
The limit of their pilgrimages reached.
And in the evening stillness she could hear
Her fellow-pilgrims' footsteps, as they walked,
Or voices, as each with the other talked,
Till they, too, sank to silence, and were hushed.

II.

Fancies and Dreams.



FANCIES AND DREAMS.



THROUGH space descending, slowly came
strange forms
Half cloud, half mist, and fanciful their shape,
And singular the colors that they wore.
These ranged from somber blackness to bright
gold,
Through each chromatic change of tint and tone;
And, on a sudden, as the figures moved,
All were commingled in one joint array,
So bright, so sparkling, so complexly blent,
The pilgrim closed o'erpowered and dazzled eyes
That could not bear the splendor of their light.
They stooped and lifted her on pinions broad,
That, as they outward spread in wide expanse,

Bore on their edges scintillating gleams,
Like to whipped foam that tops the billows' swell,
Whose crest to feathery lightness winds have
lashed;

Whose every sphere, a spectrum, light divides—
Gives back the golden largess it bestowed
In thrice ten thousand arcs of mellow hues.
Their bodies diaphanic were, and thin;
Their web-like texture she seemed slipping through,
But fell not; for with firm, elastic strength,
And buoyant poise, they held her in suspense.
Beneath her, faded out the weary world,
The long, hard road, the meager wayside cheer;
The skies drew nearer, and the stars came down,
A constellated convoy, on their way.

"Who art thou?" asked the pilgrim, wond'ringly.
One said: "I'm daylight fancies, winged at night;
Thoughts and impressions subtly taking on
Perceived identities. Beneath my sway,
Impersonal ideas personified
Become, and speak and act. The principles
That shape the purposes of life, themselves
To sentient existence are transformed;

And things man thinks and feels and knows combine
To furnish his conceits a liberal field,
Give his uncurbed imaginings full play."

And one said: "We are brothers, he and I,
Born in the self-same hour; of different names,
But twin relationship. He who knows one,
The features of the other finds not strange.
Of changeful mien and Protean shape are we;
Sometimes one stature represents us twain;
One argent plumage gives us dual flight.
Out of one airy fabric are we framed;
Its tissues light as gossamer, but strong
Its filaments, as armor wrought of chain.
One course is ours, along the hazy way
Imagination's sinuous curves have traced
In undulating path across the realm
Of fitful, varied, and fantastic thought.
Men name him 'Fancies,' but they call me 'Dreams.'"

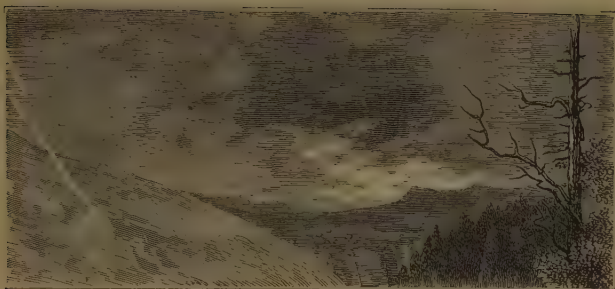
And silence followed on his spoken words;
And swift and far, out of this world she knew,
Into another type of world and clime,

A visionary sphere, the brothers twain
Half human, half divine, possessed, withal,
Of fanciful caprice, like that which marks
The playful elf or sportive sprite, conveyed
The pilgrim, unresisting, where they would.

Then, on a sudden, in a distant place,
She felt the wings that bore her cease to beat.
From tip of quill and vane, the radiance died
On their lowered points that, closing, looked less
 bright;
From them she gently slid, and stood alone,
'Mid changed surroundings—unfamiliar scenes.

III.

Approach of Science.



NATURE encompassed her on every side,
But not the Nature she aforetime knew.
Some transformation, seemingly, had passed
Upon, and altered each familiar phase.
There were high mountains and colossal
rocks,
Enough to vertebrate a continent;
And, thus environed, did the valleys lie,
Green jewels in the casket of the heights.
But all the mountains bore upon their fronts
What looked to her like network spun thereon,
Which some Arachne, Pallas-cursed, had wrought.
So fine its gleaming meshes that they seemed

Like vaporous films that, on the autumn morns,
Stretch in transparent webs across the fields;
That sometimes hang in silvery tatters, caught
On bush outreaching, or obtrusive thorns.
The children call them fairies' counterpanes,
And Catholics devout make the cross's sign
The while they gaze, believing them to be
Shreds of the cere-cloth that the virgin wore
In the tomb's cloister, but that, when to heaven
Caught up by hosts angelic, she cast off.
Yet seemed they firmer than these airy things,
Less frail; each line deep graven, cutting through
The greenery that hung its high façade,
Into the very structure of the mount.
And they bore shape of geometric forms,
And diagrams with numerals displayed.
And every rock she looked upon was stripped
Of all composite character, resolved
To primal elements; each stratum showed
Uncompromising lines, and each seemed less
Combined with that which followed, than o'erlaid.
The soil beneath her, all disintegrate,
Her wonder-wide exploring eyes beheld;

Each earth-grain separate and distinct appeared;
Each particle an entity in fact.

And, walking 'mid these strange, perplexing scenes,
A female figure did her eyes descry.
Tall and commanding, with an air assured
Of gracious certitude, she forward moved.
No fluctuant curves gave languorous ease of port,
Or sensuous motion; for her frame, well knit,
Seemed as of close-impacted angles wrought.
Not one superfluous ounce of matter there,
Beyond that used in welding each to each.
Yet was there grace, such as the iceberg shows,
When, under-currents towing its great base,
Its upper pinnacle moves slowly on,
In stately grandeur, through the open sea.

And she was clad in garment straight and long.
No drapery fettered that majestic form;
But every fold and every line, disposed
In strict simplicity, so moveless seemed,
It might have been by iron ridged in stone.
A simple fillet bound her flowing hair,

And kept its long luxuriance, straight and fine,
No wave nor ringlet broke, in ordered place.
Her face was fair and seriously calm ;
So calm, the pilgrim thought, no passionate storm
Had ever o'er its placid surface played.
Mild was its look, and yet inflexible—
Serene, but with no trace of sympathy.
It was unlike all faces she had known.
No color touched the rigid cheek and lip ;
Emotion lit no flame in the keen eyes ;
Not even speculative was their gleam,
But wide-extended were those orbs of sight
As if to compass all that might be seen,
And pass upon its character and worth.

And, while the pilgrim gazed, the figure drew
More near, and silent stood and looked on her.
And as she met that penetrating glance,
Abashed, for the first time, the pilgrim felt
She was a body of compacted dust.

“And thou?” the stranger asked ; “and who art
thou?”

"A weary pilgrim to this region borne
By Dreams and Fancies, who have onward passed."
The stranger smiled. So singular a smile
The pilgrim, till this moment, ne'er had seen.
No mirth nor merriment, delight nor joy
Seemed to constrain the motion of the lips
That, unrelaxing, coldly smiled on her.

"It is not strange they onward passed," said she,
"But strange they ever should have borne you here.
This is the realm of Fact, and idle Dreams
And Fancies have not power to here survive.
For, if, perchance they reach its boundary metes,
Some foolish mortal bearing, in their flight,
They must pass hence or perish 'neath the rays
Of the great sun of Truth that lights our world.
I've seen such disappear beneath Truth's rays,
And to behold them is a curious sight.
First, all the colors fade that overlay
The edges of their wings; to *nebulæ*,
Then into naught, the wings themselves dissolve.
Then their thin bodies lose cohesive power,
And alienated, all their particles,

No more resisting separation, drift
Asunder, and to union ne'er return.
Sometimes, however, with a mighty noise
These airy nothings do explode, nor leave
A molecule to tell they ever were ;
For, unlike matter, they can cease to be.

"And who art thou?" the pilgrim asked, in turn.

"I? Is it possible thou knowest me not?
Why, I am Science, ruler of this realm.
Sure thou hast heard of me ; the master minds
That give to thy low world the only thoughts
That elevate its life, my subjects are ;
Ennobled mortals, wearing lofty names
That brightest shine in earth's empyrean."
The pilgrim answered : "There is one more bright."
"And that?"

"The name of Jesus."

Science stood

And for a season brief, did gaze on her,
With those observant, open eyes, then spake:
"Dies Superstition, then, such lingering death?"

Dost worship the impostor Nazarene?
 Dost thou believe there is a Father-God;
 A far-off heaven's beneficent reward?
 What is that in thine hand?"

All unaware

That aught within its hold she had retained,
 The pilgrim, downward glancing, now beheld
 The little Bible she had clasped at eve,
 When from the roadside she had sat withdrawn,
 And mused on heaven and immortality.

"The Book of books," she answered, speaking low.

"Thy Book that tells how six days' carpentry
 Made the great earth that on its axes swung
 For many million years, ere yet complete,
 A ball of fiery vapor, hardening slow,
 Whose inmost heart this hour is yet alive
 With blazing tumult and portentous glow!
 Thy six days' world! O pilgrim, how believe
 Thy 'Book of books,' beginning with a lie?"

The pilgrim clasped her fingers closer yet
 About her Book of books, and answering, said:

"I do believe thou, Science, hast obtained
A better insight than of old was had
Into activities which served to form
And set afloat in space our beauteous world.
But there are things thou canst not comprehend,
If, reading that sweet idyl of earth's dawn,
In which, with loving and artistic touch
A painter poet on the canvas spreads
The gathered legends of the earliest times,
Thou brandest the narration as a lie.
Six days? We understand the little words
That serve conveyance of ephemeral thoughts;
But ever in the Bible are we taught
That days with God are not as days with men;
That when, concerning him and what he does,
Are used the common words we know so well,
They oft take on a meaning more remote,
And from things understood to mysteries turn.
I know not of the days nor years employed,
Nor know I of the agencies he used;
But this I know, that he the world did frame,
And things now seen from what doth not appear."

"Thou knowest? That is well. *How* knowest thou?"

The pilgrim drew a breath that was a sigh.
How, then, might words explain the *how* she knew?

She answered, saying: "First, by *being told*.
That datum being given, I know *by faith*,
Which in me apprehendeth the thing told;
And *Reason*, which to Faith's support doth come;
And *Inference*, offspring of their union born.
These tell me that behind things caused, exists
The cause producing them; their argument
Informs me that the nature of things caused
Being good, beneficent their cause must be;
Displaying wise design, must wisdom have;
And Reason, Inference, Revelation, all,
Do of this Power initiative speak.
In the same language, with the self-same tongue,
This Book of books speaks of the One Most High,
Father of spirits and the God of men.
Nature, from which thou, Science, dost deduce
Thy truths, is not, herself, beneficent;

Hath not intelligence; no evidence
Of feeling nor of thought doth she betray;
No plan hath she; perfunctorily evolves,
Through processes established, carried on
In her, by cause that lies outside herself;
Is subject to a power transcending hers.
Faith, Reason, Inference, Revelation, show
Of mind and spirit this great Cause possess,
To which, their origin all things confess."

Science looked down, and on the pilgrim smiled;
A smile still, slow, of scorn and passion void,
Where tolerance lingered that on pity verged.
"'T is strange," she said, "how thoughts like these
can live

In the broad daylight of the realm of Fact!
'Thou dost not as thou sayest, pilgrim, *know*!
It is not *knowledge* but *belief* thou hast."

"And dost thou, Science, say it is not so?"

"I? Nay. I only say, I do not *know*.
'T is to the subject safer to ascribe

The thing beyond a peradventure known.
 From all past ages life has been evolved,
 And matter inorganic been produced,
 From natural causes; only source we see.
 Thou sayest *mediate*, I *im*-mediate claim.
 This Nature never was to laws untrue,
 Which govern her, and from beginning had
 A trend progressive, in the which we see
 The steady, onward march of fact, evolved
 From fact anterior, evolving it."

"But back of all—ere yet was Nature formed?"

"Why sayest thou 'ere yet?' How knowest
 thou,

Since man can never antedate the hour
 When first creation did revolve in space,
 That this same Nature not immortal was?
 Or—for thine eyes do negative the thought—
 'T is easy to assume 'once on a time'
 A germ-cell, with the mighty mission fraught
 Of introducing the initial cause
 Of all the centuries' evolutions, lived."

"Once on *what* time, ere yet time did exist,
And there was none to speak and bid it be?"

"And a 'persistent force' behind it stood,
In life and mission to continuance breed.
Why must thou summon a mechanic God
To hammer out, and on its axes hang
A wound-up, clock-work universe, since He,
Himself, remains a being yet unproved?"

"And dost thou, Science, seeing what thou sayest
Is law that Nature never yet transgressed,
Not likewise see that law must comprehend
A giver who the law has introduced?
But if thou canst, like this, dismiss the claims
Of Nature to an origin divine,
Thou dost at least in species and in kind
Believe her true to universal law,
No matter whence derived, nor how confirmed.
For the first impulse toward the mind of man
That crowns creation like a diadem,
Enwraps with purple its material life,
And stands as surety for a life to come,

Where dost thou look? To beasts quadrumanous?
 Dost find it from the flattened cranium sprung,
 And shadowed in the instinct of the brute?
 If such beginnings such results can show,
 Then Nature must, like Eastern weavers, work
 According to some pattern hung o'erhead
 By Him who guideth evolution's way,
 And ordereth every issue it declares.
 Where in the germ-cell doth the wisdom lie,
 That, by the theory thyself doth hold,
 Bestows the gift upon irrational life
 Of that, in embryo, whose stature full
 On man confers the scepter and the throne?
 Nor thou nor I by searching can find out;
 And life and soul are equal mysteries.
 And as thou canst not *know* life's origin,
 Know that its germ began to fructify
 In the dim morning of creation's dawn—
 At back of which a morning must have been
 That to the germ gave its potential life—
 How better thy hypothesis than mine?
 I contradict of thine no premises
 Involving what is known; for Nature's page

Whereon is seen the impress of God's hand,
Is one with revelation, I admit.
But, Science, hast thou ever, then, beheld
Atoms of which, oft, thou assuredly speak'st?"

Then Science passed her hand across her brow—
That fair, firm hand, so supple and so strong—
As if to clear from out her active brain
Obstructive cobwebs that had gathered there,
Impeding the free exercise of thought.
Slowly she said: "I certainly must grant
The atom thou hast mentioned, I've not seen;
No microscope has e'er invented been
That has revealed it to the searching eye.
But some concession ever must be made,
Assumption from which reasoning be deduced,
And this most rational in itself appears;
Doth best agree with known phenomena."

The pilgrim smiled on Science as she said:
"‘This is not *knowledge*, it is but *belief*.’
If I accept a God omnipotent,
Instead of atoms eye hath never seen,

Wherein is superstition in my mind
More deeply rooted than it is in thine?
Nay, of the two, my thought hath broader scope,
For I assume the God and atom, too.
I grant assent to thy, 'Persistent Force.'
We differ merely in the form of words;
Thou only callest God another name."

Again, across the brow the fair hand passed,
And, speaking slowly, Science said: "Perhaps!
I have affirmed not, neither do deny.
I do not so believe; but mere belief
That is not rooted in apparent fact
Ne'er rises to conviction in my mind.
But, whether there exist a God or no,
Rest not thy faith upon his so-called 'Son,'
Whom millions worship as his messenger,
Whose birth, career, and teachings are enwrapped
In what the ignorant call 'miracle.'
Dost thou not know no 'miracle' exists,
Nor ever did; that naught can contravene
Nor thwart the dicta Nature has laid down?
That 'miracle' imposture only means?

By tracing species' origin we know
Men were developed from a lowlier life.
No man of woman born, who ever lived,
By miracle had birth—it could not be.”

“How can it chance that this ‘Persistent Force’
Thou dost admit existing back of life,
Supplying to it that continuing power,
Without which its vitality must fail,
Sustained by which ’t is richly animate,
Should be unable to communicate
Itself to matter in some line unknown
To partial Wisdom's self-sufficient sense?
To Science, that is yet in infancy;
But that when fully grown the power shall lack
To con, with carnal eyes, the Spirit's lore?
For to admit that thy ‘Persistent Force’
Is force transcending Nature's, but admits
The potency of miracle as well.
Thus thine objections to the Savior's birth
Are banished, likewise to his wondrous works;
And there are proofs that verify his claims,

Transcending any proof that from the earth
Thy hands can dig, or figure on the rocks."

"And they?"

"Are written with a subtler pen,
Invisible to thee, on the soul's page.
Christ claimed that his dominion was the realm
Of spiritual life; and on that life's
Experiences, he answers doth impress
To problems reason never yet has solved,
Though handmaid to thyself she claims to be.
Or rather, thou dost claim; and yet methinks
She looks approval on the higher truth,
Whenever to her function it appeals.
But there's persuasion beyond reason's power,
Or knowledge's as thou know'st it, or yet faith's;
From confident assurance it takes rise,
Which is the offspring of obedient love."

"Not in the realm of Fact."

"Thou dost' mistake
For thou dost know thought and perception are

Possessions that distinguish man from brute;
And these to that domain of his belong,
Furnish that proof of spiritual sway
That crowns him as divine—the Savior Son!
Feelings, emotions, aspirations high,
Are embryonic forms of prophecy;
They are the subtle shapes of unseen life—
Unseen, save in the issues they advance—
Behind which, standing a ‘Persistent Force,’
Christ furnishes the mighty power that gives
Impulsion to a life wherein such thought
Finds fitting soil for its development;
That higher life whose evolution grand
Shall raise us from the dust of earth to heaven.
The strata of that spiritual life,
Thou, Science, hast not power to analyze;
Yet, dost thou know, who art of Knowledge born,
In sequent process they are builded up;
And principles result from tendencies.
The unseen influence working known effect,
Doth lie as much within the realm of Fact,
As nurture of the plant, directly traced
For origin to protoplasm’s power.”

"What should I know of fitful feeling weak?
I have convictions, but I never feel."

"Not as do I, and yet I am assured
That thy convictions are compounded things,
In which both thought and feeling are involved.
Tenacity of grasp with which we cling
To that of which persuaded thought lays hold,
Has feeling that retentiveness doth urge.
One whose bright spirit caught the radiant flash
Of truth that vision gross might not discern,
Hath said in feeling's base the thought is laid
That o'er it towers in moveless pyramid.*
O, Science, there's a miracle of grace,
Beyond thy power of judgment and award!
Shouldst thou dispute that water turned to wine,
Blind eyes were opened, and loaves multiplied,
Thou never, never, while the ages roll,
Couldst prove to man that out of faith in Christ

*"All thought begins in feeling,—wide
In the great mass its base is hid,
And narrowing up to thought, stands glorified,
A moveless pyramid."

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

There springs not up, within his conscious soul,
A joy and hope, immeasurable, divine ;
Of earth the comfort, prophecy of heaven !
How, Science, can it be that waters rise
So far above their source, if it be true
That He who doth inspire such blissful hope,
Who is the source of such impassioned zeal,
In whose name modern miracles more great
Than those of ancient times are daily wrought
Through those humanities, from Christian root,
That spring and flower and yield their fruit to him,
Is an impostor, as thou say'st he is?"

"Delusion"—

"Then delusion hath the power,
Within itself, of working miracles."

"Thy premise is a blind, unreasoning faith ;
On it thou dost but speculate, at best.
I see thou wilt not yield thy Savior myth ;
As for thy heaven, it is a harmless hope ;
But Science doth earth's history backward read,
From last to first, as ancient Hebrews did

The lettered words of sacred parchment rolls;
 And there has never come from death's yon side
 Returning mortal to declare that life
 Is carried over and beyond that gulf
 Of blank extinction which doth swallow it."

"One 'stemmed the outward current and came
 back—
 But He was more than mortal'—to declare
 That as he lived, so man should live again."

"That resurrection miracle's a dream.
 Dost *thou*, too, look for life beyond the grave?"

"O, with what joy, because He lives again!
 Come, tell me, Science, dost thou never ask,
 As, delving 'midst God's works, thine eyes behold
 The wondrous evidences of His power,
 Wherefore its exercise, and what its aim?
 Dost thou not ever query, why put forth,
 If but for a few ages to exist,
 Only to crumble and to disappear,
 Unless it be to man to minister,

Heir of salvation, and a heavenly home?
Why given these capacities in man
If soon his mind to death must be allied,
And never nearer than conjecture come
To all that underlies life's mysteries?
Reason, O Science, give me reason why
Man was created, if 't were but to die !”

“ Against that question is the answer writ :
‘ Unknowable man's future destiny.’ ”

The pilgrim smiled, and lifting up her eyes,
Which bitter tears had washed to clearest sight,
Said: “ Wondrous knowledge from the prudent hid,
And wise, has God unto his babes revealed !
I thank him more than ever, now, for this;
For present mercy and for grace bestowed ;
For life immortal yet to be disclosed ;
For hope of heaven and Jesus ; that, at last,
Redeemed, restored, my loved ones I shall clasp.
O, there are tablets in the human heart
He graveth deeper than the granite rock !
On these I read his records, and I know

The revelation there inscribed, is truth.
Tell me, O Science, whence *thy* comfort comes,
And from what source thy pleasure doth arise."

Then Science pointed to the mountain fronts
On which the diagrams and figures were,
And to the earth and rocks, and far away
To a blue glacier's peak, that coldly rose,
In steely splendor, over its moraines.
"My pleasure is the riddle of the earth,
And all that in it is to read aright;
Discover whence the species it supports,
And link them each to each, successively,
As life's great structure to completeness grows."

"But man? Hast thou discovered whence *he*
came?"

"There is a link, as yet established not,
Connecting him with anthropoidal apes."

"And yet, thou dost assume this link exists?"

"O yes; there is no possible mistake.
The chain of evolution so complete

Would not break here, and Nature retrovert
Her process, to this point well carried on.
Cast thou away thy fond and foolish dreams
Of God and heaven and immortality,
Which, of fulfillment, such slight prospect have,
And I will teach thine intellect to read
The backward-reaching history of time ;
Resolve things to their primal elements,
And, using thine own speech, declare to thee
How worlds were made 'from what doth not appear.'
It is a grand and glorious pursuit,
And it will show thee with what unwise air
'Thy bigotry to Science condescends,
From stand-point of the Christian miracles.' " *

■
"And having cast these 'foolish dreams' away,
When I am sad what shall my sadness soothe?"

"Earth's study, up from the azoic age."

"A mighty consolation! When my tears
Will not be banished, and my memories

* Mrs. Humphrey Ward, in "Robert Elsmere."

A 'sorrow's crown of sorrows' for my brow,
Weave in a wreath of mingled flower and thorn;
When life has lost its savor, and to die
And flee from all its burdens, seemeth best,
What shall uplift and strengthen me once more
To act responsively, when duty calls?"

"Examination of primordial germs."

"And when I long, with longing uncontrolled,
For sympathy and love and tender speech,
Such as the Savior on the soul bestows
In the still hour it lingereth at his feet;
When for dead faces, and for voices gone,
And touch of precious hands that mold in clay,
My heart grows sick with anguish,—tell me,
 pray,
Where shall I seek, not the narcotic spell
Of poppied calm that brings forgetfulness,
But vigor-giving draught that strength imparts
To triumph of endurance in each ill,
And ointment that shall ease its bitter smarts
To resignation's restful calm and peace?"

"Read Darwin on relations that exist
Between *Lumbricidæ* and humid soil;
Or Huxley's lecture on the horse's hoof."

"And when death comes at last, and on mine
eyes

His icy finger presses, and I know
That life is slipping from me, and I go
To that long sleep from which men do not wake
Until the angel sounds his thrilling trump,
And greedy earth disgorges what she held?"

"Think thou on Spencer and 'Persistent Force.'"

Then spake the pilgrim, and a music sweet
Trilled in her voice, like ripple of the brook
That hastes to fling its little babbling life
Into the deeper stream that waits its gift:
"Go, read the backward riddle of the earth,
And hunt thy missing link of lower life
Conjoining brutes to the immortal man.
To me, it matters not from whence I sprang,
But whither I am tending, where I go.

Yet were thy faith repulsive history proved,
'T would not revoke creative energy ;
Great power hath He, from low evolving high,
And from the ape the soul's immensity.
A truthful impress much that thou hast said
Doth bear ; but truth that can not comfort me
Nor dry one tear, nor yet one hope inspire.
Not one immortal promise it conveys,
To strengthen me to battle with this life,
Or forward look to one more fair than this,
Beyond that awful change that comes to all.
I better love that spiritual truth,
Conformable to loftier lineage,
On page of inspiration here made known,
Which richly blossoms and bears luscious fruit
That shames thy barrenness ; and I will die,
If need be, ere I will relinquish it."

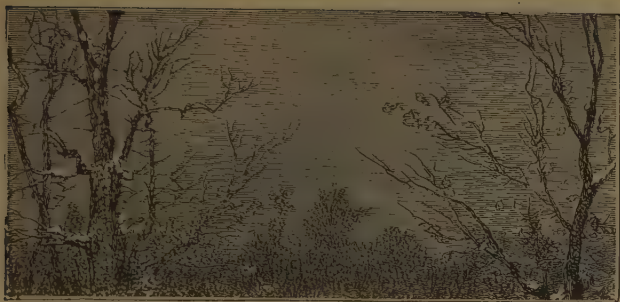
Then Science smiled upon her, as at first,
A smile all passionless, and turned away,
And moved with stately calmness from her sight.

IV.

“The Spirit of Investigation.”



THE SPIRIT OF INVESTIGATION.



AND as she vanished, all the scene was changed.

The rocks and mountains fleetly disappeared,
And the earth's surface like a parchment
seemed,

Old and discolored, and of wrinkled lines,
As if in ridge and furrow it were plowed.
And from the ridges there grew up strange plants,
Unlike to any she had ever seen,
On which was many a gnarled and thorny branch ;
And, in a furrow kneeling, she beheld,
In cap and gown such as the student wears,
Another female figure, which did dig,

With implement of modern husbandry,
And patient toil, to bring some tuber forth.
And as, from time to time, reluctantly,
Earth's hardened crust released the treasure sought,
She held it up to her myopic view,
That through two crystal lenses closely peered.

The curious pilgrim to her nearer drew,
And downward bent to see the things exhumed.
Their semblance varied, but they all were roots ;
Cadaverous was their color, as of things
Long dead; and powerful odor that they bore
Of must and mold, as from the earth they came,
Was that of air from antique sepulchers.
And with the odor mingled voices three,
Each speaking language that she did not know ;
But one had sound of ancient Aryan speech,
That jostled words of strange Semitic birth—
Such as old Father Heber may have used
Beyond the far Euphrates, where he dwelt—
With dialect Chaldaic deftly mixed.

Perceiving that the pilgrim by her stood,
The youthful scholar (for she was not old)

Arose, and lifted her exploring eyes
To read the meaning of the pilgrim's face.
And, as she stood, the growths within her hands,
Grotesquely branching in their radicles,
In odd, fantastic lines their shapes revealed.

“What succulent juices in these rootlets lie
For use as food or medicine, that thou
Dost labor with such zeal to bring them forth?
And what are they that have not human life,
Yet speak, as men at Babel, many tongues?”

The scholar held out both her burdened hands,
And fondly gazed upon the spoils they bore.
“This is the pastime of my leisure hours,
Though they, of late, have been but few and fleet.
As men of years to childhood's sports return,
In their diversions cast aside their cares,
So I, to that which pleased my earlier youth.
These are the roots of Hebrew and of Greek,
And ancient Aramaic, Hebrew's source.”

She placed them carefully upon the ground,
And in her hands, as if by magic brought,

The pilgrim saw an ancient parchment scroll,
Shaven and pumiced in an age long gone ;
Of mellowed tint that had with passing years
Grown like stigmata of the crocus flower—
That hue of archæologists' delight.
She gave it to the pilgrim, with command :
“ Unroll and look, and read the script it bears ! ”

And on its yellow surface was inscribed,
In backward-written words of Hebrew speech,
And gnarled characters of ancient Greek,
Forms like the ones the scholar laid aside.
And while she gazed in wonder and amaze,
With eager glances did interrogate,
The fair gowned scholar, slightly smiling, said :
“ Burning inquiries in thine eyes I read
As readily as if they had been traced
On ancient papyrus, for mine to scan.
Not from those roots are yielded remedies
That medicine the old mistakes of men,
But virtues that I from this scroll express,
With reason mixed, set right the theories
Unauthorized tradition brought to birth ;

A bastard brood, unfathered by the truth.
Think'st thou no succulence therein abides?
So thought Ezekiel, in the valley's midst,
As over its dry bones his glances roved;
But voice of prophecy brought bone to bone,
Flesh, sinew, breath,—and, lo, they lived again!
So resurrect I forms of ancient thought
That bear the standards by the which I set
At rest vexed questions of old literatures;
Teach through their matter how to learn their age;
Decide their authorship, assign their worth;
Explode opinions that encompass them,
And, till of late, considered of themselves
As part and parcel; likewise comprehend
Analysis which leads through lingual types,
And illustration's multifarious forms,
Back to the schools and ages giving bent
And marked propulsion to the written word."

"And wherefore unto manuscripts like these,
In modern times, apply these searching tests?
Did not contemporaneous people know,
And, knowing, ancient authorship decide,

E'er since, with putting off of flowing verse,
The long robes of historic infancy,
And girding up in prose the loins of thought,
Its spirit crystallized in written words?
For 'there were giants in those days,' incised
With powerful stylus on their age, as well
As metal tables that the burin traced,
The types which framed the texture of their
thoughts,

Whose classic styles of grand simplicity
Have served as patterns never rivaled yet
In the æsthetic judgment of mankind.
How comes it that a people then far off,
Whose century was a future yet unborn,
Can thus determine, in their arrogance,
Decisions that contrariwise do tend?
Did they not know the thunders of their gods,
Whose grand reverberations shook the world?
A world too narrow in those earlier days
For men of weight to tarry long unknown.
And as we recognize by sound of voice
And facial likeness, children of our friends,
Arrangement of archaic thought and phrase

On Hebrew marbles, by their strokes disclosed,
Vellum, and parchment, too, the hand that wrought.
Are not traditions—if thou call'st them so—
That, rising in the era of a deed,
(Or period that approximating stands,)
Whose marvelous execution has been wrought
With mighty sword, or with still mightier pen,
A cloud of witnesses that testify,
‘‘T was he!’ of value that by far exceeds
This analytic acumen that comes
With lagging pace, so many centuries late?
Is modern man of so much subtler mind
Than poet, sage, historian, and scribe,
Who read these annals in those earlier times,
That what they failed to see his thought can grasp
Concerning their own age, and boldly use
As lever to o’return their chroniclers,
And cast discredit on their chronicles?
Thou sittest far away, methinks, to call
Thy judgment seat the court of last appeal.”

“How strange it is that when I strive to teach
This generation knowledge of a type

It least doth know, and is not competent,
Unhelped by me, its mysteries to acquire,
Its stolid mind advices doth reject
That to its information much would add.
And further, in the rage of ignorance,
Its puny arm, grown like Læstrigons' strong,
Would fain the rocks of Lamos on me cast;
Or those with which the Olympian deities
With outcast Titans courtesies exchanged;
Ossa and Pelion tumble 'round mine ears."

"Of what unwelcome type that knowledge, pray?"

"I think I see the text-book in thine hand;
Is't not the Bible that thou holdest there?"

"Yes, friend, and if thy wisdom clearer makes
Its mystery-bearing meanings to my soul,
Be sure I'll thank thee from a grateful heart,
And not reward thee with a Titan's rock."

So saying, she held forth her little Book.
The scholar took and turned it, leaf by leaf;
Read here and there a sentence or a verse;

Then to the pilgrim looking up, she said :
" I leave its meanings for thyself to find,
For such interpretations lie beyond
The mission wherunto my labor tends.
I'll tell thee, though, the legislator meek,
'The son of Pharaoh's daughter,' never wrote
These first five books the world ascribes to him ;
Nor David all the music-ringing Psalms,
Unless he had a thousand lives or so ;
For over all of Hebrew history's plains,
And touching each event within its range,
Go plaint and pæan of the Psalter's strains.
And Solomon, though wise, the wisdom lacked
For all the Proverbs that are here set down.
Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs
Were penned by authors in oblivion lost.
Though Jeremiah voiced enough laments,
The 'Lamentations' had a different source.
And there were two Isaiahs, you must know,
Or two who wrote the poems in his name,
Whose prophecies to different times belong.
And Paul, the great apostle, made mistakes
Which prove he never could have been inspired ;

Else he would ne'er the people's faith have taught
To look expectant for the Lord's return
In the same generation he went hence.
Then, too, the Messianic prophecies,
In greater part, have never been fulfilled,
And can not be, as their specific time
Has passed and left them but as idle dreams.
The Gospels many errors have therein,
And the 'beloved disciple' you believe
The writer of that strange Apocalypse
Which has been named a 'literature of dreams,'
And Gospel and Epistles by his name,
May ne'er have set his hand to one of them;
For those traditions which affirm he did,
Are met by views of critics, who assign
Dates thereunto which fail to correspond
With those of men who argue for St. John."

"Assurance of these ancient worthies' deeds
Gives tripping fleetness to thy sure address.
Have they, in rehabilitating dust,
From crypt and charnel of the ages gone,
Arisen out of rest to counsel thee?"

“Rock first! My prescience told me thou wouldst
throw.

I know it by the rules delivered thee,
Deploring, as I did, thy piteous state
Of blind enslavement unto false ideas,
Applying to this work of human hands
As fully as to aught they e’er achieved.

“And dost thou wholly man’s accomplishment
Reckon that labor, unto which, constrained,
Men were, as instruments of Power divine,
Incited, spurred, and gloriously compelled
By inspiration of the Holy Ghost?”

“Thou speak’st of inspiration; dost thou think
By verbal inspiration, then, they wrote?”

“What else? A formless idea, wholly vague?
A floating shapelessness of general thought?
The Word of God would be but word of man,
Thus energized, thus hazily inspired.”

“Thou thinkest, then, he made its authors scribes,
To write his meanings out in clerkly hand?”

“I think, if 't is God's letter to mankind,
'T is his dictation, whoe'er held the pen.
Thy secretary's letter is his own,
Unless his pen to thy dictation glides.
He may, I own, correct thy lapsing phrase,
If, of the two, he have the better taste,
Or finer thought, or comelier form of speech.
But thou, I think, wilt scarcely care to claim
The Holy Ghost required such exercise
Of human agency, when thus employed,
Transmitting holy truths by man to men.
But ere we into deeper waters step,
Let us go back to where we entered in!
If these same books, whose authorship thou
touch'st
With 'Presto, change!' of thy magician's wand,
Are still God's word, and credence from mankind
Deserve as such, is it not strange, in truth,
Admitting what thou say'st, that all of these
Who bear such shining names—this galaxy
Of bright and lofty ones, 'mong whom were God's
Effectual working men, among the Jews,
And later in the Apostolic Church—

Should have been put aside and overlooked,
When He had honors to bestow like this?
And is't not stranger still, that men unknown,
Unnamed, unheard of, could so well have worn
Throughout so many ages, tunics made
To fit such grand Colossi; could bestride
With attitude august, and kingly might,
The centuries that erstwhile have elapsed
In sacred history's records until now;
And never had their borrowed garments stripped
From off their shoulders till that hand of thine
Laid rending touch upon their purple fringe?
It may be thou wilt tell me what thy name!"

"The Spirit of Investigation, I!
In different generations, divers names
Have unto me and to my work attached;
A work that varies, likewise, with the times,
Although its spirit ever is the same;
And narrow-minded men of every age
Have voiced their venom in the titles used.
They call me 'Higher Criticism' now—
My friends, at least; my enemies declare

I'm but a phase of rationalistic thought,
Such as in varied guises has disturbed,
And under different forms, the Christian Church
E'er since it was established, to this date.
I differentiate the false and true,
Which in men's thoughts identical are held
For lack of knowledge to distinguish them,
And their specific differences declare.
My appellations are ephemeral things,
Appropriate only to the passing hour ;
But though they alter, I am still the same ;
With Time's cessation, only, ends my life."

"As criticism is thy mission now,
Pray tell what thy critiques would fain destroy."

"False theories, unwarranted to live,
Anent the book thou holdest in thine hand ;
Its verbal inspiration, also false ;
Assumption, likewise, of inerrancy,
And doctrine that man may not be inspired,
Unless he be a man of lofty name,
Transcendent virtue and assertive fame."

"Inerrancy? I do not understand."

"I mean that Scripture, like all work of man,
Has errors in 't; is not infallible."

"Then, wonder-worker, wouldst thou overthrow
The Word of God, the only hope of man;
The chart by which the voyager would sail
To reach the better land that's far away?
Concerning errors of the which thou speak'st,
That seem, I sorrowing say, to give thee joy,
Dost thou refer to scientific thought,
Whose greatest triumph our own age has seen,
Wherein a blunder easily had been,
Or incidental circumstance aside
From the grand current of the purposed flow
Of history both human and divine?
If 'neath the apostolic garmentings,
In which their mission stood approved of God,
Thy criticism strikes to find the *man*,
I doubt not thou wilt find him fallible
In speech and thought, and in conception oft;
In every thew and sinew vulnerable.

Of mortal creatures the restrictions are
Such as to make their labors oftentimes seem
Like to the strata of the valued quartz,
Which, though they hold the veinings of the
gold,
Are to be found with granite intermixed,
And colored by the iron or the clay.
Count not these truths as errors of the Word,
But simply limitations of the man.
I knew not that it was considered fact
By thinkers of discriminating mind,
That as concerneth aught of Bible lore,
Not an essential to eternal life,
Nor to the history that it may comprise,
Nor utterance of the word of prophecy,
The inspiration of the Holy Ghost
Illuminated any phase of truth."

"Long as thou dost admit the fact I claim,
Thy weak distinction without difference is.
Not Bibliolatry, but Christ should be
Thy constant end and aim in worshipping.
And if within a doctrine lies the truth,

It needs no lofty name to bolster it,
No Church infallible to authorize."

"If, sayest thou? How know men of the truth
In things where human judgment goes astray
And is not competent, untaught, to speak,
Save from the records of this little Book?
And if 't is not infallible and true
Beyond the faintest shadow of a doubt,
How know I, then, that in the very phrase
Which makes Him 'King of kings and Lord of
lords,'

Hope of the soul and Savior of the lost,
I do not stumble on some error there,
And, in believing, run the awful risk
Of building all my faith upon mistake?
How know we, either one, of truth divine,
If there be not one record which mistake
And error have not ventured to approach,
Kept back from sullyng its stainless page
By an almighty Power they dared not cross?"

"The *doctrines* of the faith I leave untouched."

"O, generous soul! Thy desecrating hand
Would but disturb the faith men have therein.
Shake the foundations on the which they rest,
And of themselves they totter to a fall
In the esteem of those who held them dear.
I am not skilled in thine analysis;
I can not speak for Moses nor Isaiah,
Nor when, nor how they wrote, or not at all;
Though *Jesus* said that Moses wrote of him.*
If not, by forecast, in the Pentateuch,
In what forgotten record did he write?
Perhaps the Son of the Almighty erred;
A God might make mistakes in authorship
Where sage philologists would never trip.
Magnanimous to leave the doctrines there,
Yet claim pens uninspired have written them!
The *Christian* knows inherent is their truth;
They who obey the will, the doctrines *know*,
But by external evidence, as well,
And outward proof hath God the Father meant
To draw new converts to his holy Son.
The unbeliever, justified, may say,

*S. John v, 46.

When, to the end designed, thy mission draws,
‘What warrant find I on thy Bible’s page
For confident assurance of its truth?
If uninspired, how know I Christ is God,
Or am I bound unto him to submit?
Mahomet’s, Buddha’s, any moral code
Comes with authority that equals his,
If inspiration hath not framed his Word.’”

“I said not, pilgrim, it was uninspired,—
For by thy garb I see that such thou art.”

“Thou didst but intimate some hazy truth
Of general application, creeping in,
Impressed the thoughts of some unheard-of
men;
Somebody, somewhere, who they were, un-
known;
And yet, contending as thou dost for proof,
Thou canst accept as genuine their words.
So wise and yet so credulous art thou!
So doubtful, yet so child-like is thy faith,
Thou dost receive, not questioning the source.”

The scholar's shapely shoulders shrugged themselves

'Neath the straight folds of her scholastic gown.

"Authority is not synonymous
With that which is itself infallible;
And your Book's value does not rest upon
Who wrote it, nor inerrant text therein;
But in its power to rouse and waken souls
And lead them to attempt the Christian life.
It has been said, and I believe it true,
No human words, of howe'er subtle shade
Or graduated meaning, can express
The smallest part of one divine idea.
That, for its import, we must grope and search
Beneath, above, within, without the text,
Till, in the ultimate, to which doth tend
Train of that search's progress, we shall find,
At limit'line of all analysis,
Best indications of the thing God meant.
If this be so, and so I argue 't is,
Why whimper after inspiration blent
With such elusive subtilties as words,

Of which the spirit only hath true life ;
And that, to different ages in their turn,
‘Must be progressively interpreted?’
Use thou the reason God on man bestowed ;
Authority that, with the Church itself,
And with the Scripture is co-ordinate.”

“Whose reason shall be drawn on—thine or mine,
Or that of minds unlike to either one?
What reason human training biases,
Or that the heart’s affection doth control,
Or circumstances cause to deviate,
As education or as interest wills,
Is clear, impartial, great, and strong enough
To be unto the world of craving hearts
What Atlas was unto the globe itself;
And rest on the conclusions of a brain
In perfect equipoise, that weighs the claims
Of truth and falsehood evenly and well,
The arbitrated destinies of men?
We read there is a part of the Azores,
The waters of the North Atlantic bathe,
Where the magnetic needle never strays,

Nor dips, nor is deflected in its course.
But reason never yet, in human mind,
And limitations that restrict it here,
Could rise superior to the mind itself,
Cramped and confined by its environments,
And act as loyal and unswerving guide
To the meridian of hidden truth,
Which He, of whom it is essential part,
Alone hath power to hide or to reveal.
No gimbals, holding it in free suspense,
Of independent thought's unfettered hold,
Can perfect equilibrium bestow,
All unaffected by external things
Attractive to man's fancies and his hopes,
And to the motions of the world and time.

“But, speaking without figures, I would say,
Concerning qualities that do inhere
In human reason, thou hast made mistake.
Thou think'st it the determiner that finds
Within all base alloys, in its assay,
The one pure metal that its search rewards.
Thou think'st it is the magic glass, wherein

The Persian poet tells us Solomon,
To magnify the wisdom he possessed,
Beheld 'the cause of all things' when he gazed.
Like quicksilver, it runs to find the gold
And separate its wealth from worthless ore ;
Yet, unlike this, it often fails to make
Amalgam that proclaims successful test.
Though reason is a gem of matchless worth,
It is not flawless in its brilliancy,
And though, like the king's mirror, it reflects
The pictured truth in bright inerrancy,
With figured causes of the things that be,
As oft, like troubled pool, it fails to glass
Correct proportions it should reproduce,
And, all distorted in its lines and curves,
Unlikeness hideous it delineates.
But hast thou pushed to such exhaustive end
Pursuit of meaning that in words is hid,
'To limit line of all analysis,'
Ere boldly thou proclaimest prophecies
Referring to Messiah, unfulfilled,
And such as in their nature e'er must be,
Because the limit of their time is past?

A little longer con thine alphabet,
And search for hidden purport, ere thou speak'st
To such discredit of the Holy Ghost.
I would not contradict thy postulate
Concerning words that play hide-and-go-seek;
The lesson only thou wouldst from it draw.
If't be that human words so lacking are
In spiritual force, to represent
That thought to us that higher than our own
Is, as the heaven is higher than the earth,
(As one may well consider them to be,)
In making portraitures for minds of men
Which through the words alone the 'concepts'
grasp,
Would not the Spirit careful searching make
For those which best unfolded every shade
Of purpose and design embodied there;
Gave hint and color of His meaning forth?
Since that which *best* shall represent the thought,
Evades and baffles oft the mind's pursuit,
And leads it far afield to compass truth;
Depicted only in a *general* way,
And left to word devices of man's own,

What devious deflections of that thought
Through roving, rambling, and discursive speech,
Would fail its heaven-sent mission to complete;
To be *a lamp* unto the pilgrim's feet.
Thou claimest, virtually, that this is so;
On such supposed deflections base thy plea;
Thy witness 'gainst the Word's inerrancy.
But human nature, erring at the best,
When called to treat on subjects so sublime,
Needs unction greater than to mirror forth
The customs of the people and the times,
And the enlightenment that marks the age,
As chroniclers of less importance do;
Plenary inspiration that uplifts
Above the level thoughts of common life,
And with the temple veil asunder rent,
Accepts the word from Him who sits within.
Unless men guidance had, determinate,
As certain as was Ariadne's thread
To Theseus 'mid the Cretan labyrinth's maze,
To words of which no jot or tittle moves,
No matter what the progress of the times,
Can we believe the labors of their hands

Are worthy of the credence of our souls,
Or stake our every hope upon their truth?
For if the Bible be but history,
A literature of peoples and of times
When theocratic rule inflamed men's zeal,
It sinks to history's level, and henceforth
No longer doth it holy sacredness
Nor high significance for man possess.
How higher than the Veda doth it stand—
The sacred literature Hindoos revered?
Or venerated Persian writing old
Of the Avesta; like to it, in this,
Men have disputed o'er its authorship?
If 't were man's book, thy premise I might grant
For spite its errors, here and there might shine
Some gem of value, or the truth's pure gold;
But, being God's instead, it must not err.
One error trips more than ten thousand faiths,
And turns from righteousness ten thousand souls.
Hast thou not heard of 'rift within the lute,
'That, by and by, will make its music mute?'
If inspiration of the sacred page
So variable and uncertain is,

It leaves men free to form such theories
As please their fancies best regarding it ;
Then, as a rule of conduct and of life,
It ceases to command respect of them ;
Becomes a theme whereon to speculate,
For dilettante and for sage, alike ;
But never from the one who demonstrates
Nor him who listens with judicial mind
Henceforth the text obedience demands."

"No matter what objections thou dost urge,
These are the facts my study has revealed ;
My truths must stand."

"And God's go to the wall?
What fair sophistic reasoning can avail
To hold men's reverence for a partial truth,
Or lead them to a Christ who must partake
Of the uncertain nature of the book
Wherein his advocacy strongest stands?
I know upon the older Testament
Most fiercely doth thy criticism turn ;
But each to each is linked with silver ties

Of a relationship so close and strong
That blow which maims or injures either one
Must to the other's detriment recoil.
The evolution of 'God's love to man,
(Or its expression—mine is human speech),
Which comes to its perfected fruit in Christ,
From stage to stage of that old history
Developed to this consummation sweet;
Beginning with the Eden prophecy,
'The woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head.'
What 'verbal inspiration' greater power
Of nice discrimination could possess,
To words more crystalline of sense to move,
Viewed in the light that Jesus' mission throws?
But as concerns thy plea of doctrines left
Uninjured by thy decimating touch,
Skeptic and infidel may rightly jeer
At such authority as will remain
When thy bold hand, with sacrilegious touch,
Its inspiration and its faultless truth
Has torn away and trampled in the dust.
Or has essayed to; for I do not fear
That, through thine efforts, such may be its fate."

"Thy pious ignorance my scorn doth wake.
I *know* the thing concerning which I speak."

"Thou say'st thy criticism touches not
The central doctrines that the book enshrines,
Or God, his Fatherhood, and Jesus Christ.
But if, to me, its tendency should be,
As to full many surely it will prove,
To trouble and distress and sadden me,
And raise up questions that no answers find,
Better for me my 'pious ignorance'
That deems the Word of God unsullied truth,
Than erudition that destroys belief,
And leaves the soul an aimless, drifting barque,
No compass, chart, no Father at the helm;
No Pilot through life's dangers guiding it;
No beacon-light to warn it from the rocks;
No haven waiting at the journey's end!

"I care not for thy wisdom and thy skill;
I turn my back on thy disturbing claims,
And clasp unto my heart this precious Book,
To have, to hold, to trust in, cherish, keep,

Till death unfolds—or life, on death's yon side—
Fulfillment of each blissful prophecy
Its words have pictured, and my soul received :—
Perhaps behold them, like the butterfly,
That crawls the earth a homely common worm,
Develop charms of hidden symmetry,
And fan, with golden wings, the airs of heaven ;
While, yet again, these words shall Jesus speak,
That to my spirit herald rapture sweet,
In accents soft and tender: 'Blessed they
Who never having seen, have yet believed.'"

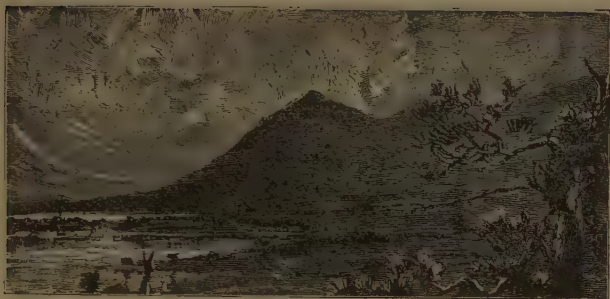
And in a transport, clasping close the book
Unto her heart that o'er it pulsed and yearned,
With lifted face that on it bore a light
That from within was kindled and did grow,
She turned, and from the scholar passed away ;
And heard, in passing, her low, scornful laugh.

v.

The Pilgrim and Theosophy.



THE PILGRIM AND THEOSOPHY.



AS she went forth, the landscape altered was;
The hard, seamed, wrinkled furrows were
no more,
And, in their stead, a tender herbage grew.
Unto the north a chain of mountains rose,
Whose lofty peaks, that soared to meet the clouds,
Were hooded as with silvered ermine cowl,
That did proclaim them as the "the home of snow."*
And in the valley where she walked were wells
And fountains to keep moist and cool the air.
Here all the charms that grace a beauteous clime,
'Neath her admiring eyes concentered were.

* Himalayas.

A banyan-tree, whose drooping arms embraced
The soil, and sprang anew in long arcades
And cloisters, still, inviting, green, and cool,
Did woo the pilgrim to lie down and rest
Within the compass of its grateful shade.
And tall and haughty stood the leafy palms,
That under the close chaplet of their crowns
Were weighted with the milk-filled cocoanuts.
The brooding air held aromatic scent
And fragrance, that it bore from spices sweet,
And sandal-wood that in the hedge-rows grew,
And piquant perfume that the zephyrs caught
From creamy umbels of the anise-flower,
Exotic from the land of pyramids.
And gorgeous birds, at her approach, up-flew,
With whirl of wings and chatter of strange speech—
Those spots of light that feed upon the flowers,
And, in their flight, metallic lusters show ;
Gold pheasants, feathered as from paradise,
And paroquets, in varied tints bedecked ;
And peacocks, pompous splendor of whose tails
Was eyed, like Argus, in each feathery plume.
Swift blendings of chameleon surprise

Touched crest and pinion in each changing light,
The while they flashed from branch of tree to
shrub,

Or in their stately beauty walked the earth,
And nipped the fruit, or on the legumes fed.
And there were gardens where the roving breeze
Was faint and languid with the slumberous breath
The heavy-headed poppy flowers exhaled,
(Those blossoms the wise goddess strews for sleep,)
Or richer grew with sweets he filched away
From panicles of snowy jessamine.

And 'mid the flowers the stealthy serpents crawled,
As sins and sorrows trail amid our joys.

And pranked with purple, rose, and tender blue,
Or snowy in their colorless racemes,
On thickly-growing plants in stretching fields,
Sprang the long blossoms of the indigo.

A witchery of color thrall'd the air,
Like to a cloud on which the setting sun
Throws back enchantment of his latest rays
That stain its nebula with rosy tones,
That on its breaking edges turn to gold;
The mango-branches' pinkish-yellow flowers,

That yield such lovely promises of fruit.
And, not far off, were murmurs as of streams,
And liquid monotones that did not change
Of backward-falling jets, which, to the air,
In prodigal delight their white sprays cast,
But ever to the marble did return
Which walled the hidden source from whence they
sprang,—

As hopes, that fail to reach where they aspire,
Beat back in monotone of weak despair
Against the walls that seem to bound their
power.

Save that the voice of Nature never falls
In cadences so sad as voice of man,
Who from her patience should the lesson learn
That everything for God's own time must wait,
And to the soul that waiteth, comes no loss.
And on the basins' edges lilies grew,
In blue and purple, and of hueless white,
As if by impact with the waters struck
From out the bowl that held the crystal pool,
That, by their beauty, would console its grief.
Thus from the soul of man, in bitterest hour,

Ofttimes upspring most beauteous flowers of
faith.

And midst this scene, enchanting and serene,
'Neath canopy of arborescent bloom,
In loose and flowing robe, an image sat,
Of one with tender eyes, who mildly mused.
But, as the sound of footsteps reached his ear,
And, on the form advancing, fell his eye,
He rose, performed a courteous salaam,
And bade her welcome to the Eastern world.

"'T is a fair world," said she; "the hand that
made,
Must well have loved its work, and lovingly
Have molded it to shape, in forming it."

"It doth, indeed, stand for a grand idea;
For things we see are but reflected shape,
Or shadow cast by things intangible."

"From thy grave words and meditative mien,
I see that thine appreciative thought
Doth trench upon the serious side of life."

“Hath it another, then? Its lightest froth
Is but the topmost crest of waves below,
Whose depths man's longest plummet can not
sound.”

“Thy speech's deep thoughtfulness proclaims
the sage.”

“If study of the causes which do make
Conditions of this life what they now are,
And perfect insight as to remedies,
Which on them act as alteratives to change,
Shall serve to give me title to the name
Thou speakest, then to me that name belongs.
For I have sat and brooded day and night
Upon man's mission and his destiny—
Whence doth he come and whither doth he go;
What influence, malign, doth hold him bound,
And what, beneficent, must set him free;
How evil's reign may best abolished be;
What cardinal virtue has its exercise,
And grows and gains new vigor in such act.
If it be possible to reconcile

The due rewards attending right and wrong
With any substituted sacrifice.

And musing thus, I have solution found
To questions hitherto insoluble.

I know, now, whence he comes and where he
goes;

That many repetitions life requires
For perfect and complete development;
Know how to read disclosures of his past
In words his present speaks, and presage make
Of that which in the future lies, as well."

"How, to thee, in thy meditative mood,
Came there convictions of such portent, friend?"

"From the Enlightener of the human mind."

"What medium used he in this ministry?
Came this enlightenment through church of his,
Or book inspired, or other auspices?"

"Thy question doth betray that thou hast come
From schools of men upholding church and creed,

Which, as abaters of our sins, or yet
As solacers of woes, fail utterly.
I doubt not thou art one who doth believe
Doctrine impractical which they have taught
Regarding a 'vicarious' offering;
Accepting or rejecting which, to live
Or die, man may determine by a choice.
But to your question:—this enlightenment
Came to my mind direct from Him who gave.
None mediates between my soul and Him;
Exists there no mechanical device
Conveyancing the thought from Mind Supreme
To me, an emanation from himself;
Not a creation that his hand has made,
But an emission from himself thrown off,
To be once more absorbed and swallowed up,
When many incarnations are fulfilled,
And they have wrought their aim, and made me
pure."

"That 'Mind Supreme' hath a familiar sound.
Is He who bears the title likewise 'Brahm?'
Good friend, if thou be part of Deity?

However small, how can it e'er have chanced
That to impurity may be allied
Or sin, or moral blindness, what thou art?
A house or kingdom that divided is
Against itself, is destined to its fall;
And spark from God emitted that doth tend
To light the fires of sin, hath ceased to be,
In its deep degradation, part of Him.
He can not sin; He can not be impure;
And any emanation that from Him
Comes forth, must be, in nature, like its source.
O, what a spectacle: the mighty God
Engaged throughout the ages of all time,
Re-incarnations ever multiplied,
To discipline, refine, and cleanse—*himself*!
Of all his millions of emitted sparks,
Not one true to its origin—*himself*!
Surely this is a wonderful belief,
Surpassing, in its inconsistency,
All inconsistencies aforesaid known!
My curious ear is listening for thy name."

"That name epitomizes what I claim."

"What name can mean so much?"

"Theosophy."

"Thy face hath not a wrinkle, but thy name
Proclaims the many centuries thou hast lived."

"Not I. I am descended from the Buddh,
But changed in many a feature as the child
Of later generations often is.
The superstitious thoughts that, hand in hand,
Beneath these skies in early days were linked
With faith in theosophic truth, are gone;
With growing light, my wisdom lopped away.
And more especially in other climes;
For what was once religion of the East,
And for its devotees a thing apart,
Now gains new converts from the growing West
That in it see a practical escape
From the vexed doctrines that the priests espouse."

"What 'superstitions' hast thou lopped away?
Dost thou not still in Lamaism trust?
Sequential line of purely virtuous souls

In which divinity its temple rears?
Which, when the bodies framing, fall to dust,
Take on new forms, with eyes that ever see
The inmost secrets of all human hearts?
But well thy doctrine holds these virtuous ones
Can be discovered but by favored priests,
Who to the rank and file of worshipers
Declare that the succession onward moves.
Well for thy creed; for average human minds
Would scarce select as of desert so high
Weak mortal creatures, subject to the faults
And vanities and greeds of common life,
To set them up as priests and priestesses
Possessing some occult and mystic power.
And is it *thou* who speak'st of 'doctrines vexed,'
Whose bonnet-bee doth so absurdly buzz?"
Then from her tone the momentary scorn,
Which unto shrillness had its music keyed,
Departed, and inflections sweet returned.
"I read a doctrine here," she gently said,
As to the image's sight she held her book,
"So simple that it can not be called 'vexed';
So practical no superstitious shoots

Require to be lopped off ere proselytes
And converts may be made of thinking minds.
Its tenet is, that God *created* souls,
Not threw them out from his supreme repose,
And gave them choice of evil or of good.
They chose the evil, and He, loving them,
With gracious Father-hand did interpose
To rescue from their own untoward choice.
One spark, *one glorious spark*, emitted He;
A sinless Savior from himself sent forth
To die for man that he through Him might be
Received, accepted, saved eternally."

"But due reward each act must ever bring,
Of good or evil, as its nature is;
How, then, could any ever interpose
To keep effect from following on cause?"

"Effect *did* follow, but on Him it fell,
This Savior sinless, that our love, as well,
Might turn to him, whose love for us did save
From death and ruin. 'T is a blessed thing
To know sin's debt has all been paid in Him,

And all required of us is to *believe*,
And follow in the path where he has walked.
An onerous task *thou* layest on mankind
Of self-purgation from all dross and sin ;
Of ceaseless struggle, with no hand to help.
It is a monstrous thing to vindicate
The agony of death which brings not rest,
But added pains of life again renewed,
In which the consequence of former deeds,
With their long train of misery entailed,
Is such no soul can bear it and be saved.
Thou scorn'st atonement by 'vicarious' means ;
Yet what is this that dooms a later life,
Unconscious of a life e'er lived before,
Or deeds demanding sacrifice therein,
Its antecedents' guilt and crime to bear,
The burden of the old sin's penalty ?
'T is the same meaning with a different name,
And hard upon the generations wears.
Not once for all, as in the Christian's faith,
But, evermore, throughout all time, goes on
The expiation of unending sin.
Especially"—and here the pilgrim smiled—

"Must it be burdensome to spirit life
That 'hath no certain form' as reads thy faith.
Does God so little care, believest thou,
For sparks from his own being earthward cast,
That he can sit serenely on his throne
And see the ceaseless round of endless pain
Re-birth attaches to successive life?"

"Not endless. Present life alone decides
The destiny the future hath in store.
Its habits and ambitions, and its hopes,
Furnish the forming power lodged in ourselves.
And not alone for penalty, birth's use,
But gain of purity through discipline;
The transient and material to subdue,
And in its place establish the ideal.
Thus doth life alternate with death—give time
Ere yet the tabernacle's quite destroyed,
'Its ridge-pole sundered and its rafters broke,'
To yield submission to the Karmic law,
(The doctrine thou would'st strictest justice call,)
Defeat re-birth, gain credit for the soul,
And reach Nirvana's peace. Not Deity

Nor Devil, as thou thinkest, but thyself,
And thou alone, art thine own providence."

"Thou claimest man shall be absorbed in God,
But *arguest* God shall be absorbed in man,
In making self his only providence.
The Deity sits on the heavenly throne,
But gives his scepter into human hands!
The perfect God emits imperfect life,
And leaves it, unassisted, to work out
A perfect and ideal destiny;
Emits a life with bias toward the wrong,
And no propulsion save its own ideals,
Imperfect and confused toward the right,
And then, when after ages' strife of lives
Unnumbered, said by thee to be the same,
The man appears who yields to Karmic law,
And leaves the lower for the high ideal,
With what reward doth gracious Deity
Approve the victory generations wrought?
Nirvana; simply he doth cease to be,
To know, to feel, enjoy; is swallowed up
In 'Mind Suprême;' his little spark o'erwhelmed,

And *all that made him man* o'erwhelmed as well.
No fond reunion in a happier world
With dear ones death has parted from us here;
No *conscious* union with that Mind himself.
For this oblivion hath he lived and striven;
For this obliteration, self denied;
To this extinction, tended all his hopes.
Thou hast a trifle higher risen, friend,
In reverence for thy lofty origin,
Than antecedents of thy nation born,
Who to account for pre-existent life
And to provide a punishment for sin,
Believed the Brahm his human offspring doomed
To transmigrate to flesh of brute and beast;
But higher yet in spiritual truth,
To finished work of Jesus lift thine eyes,
Ere thou canst know what happiness inheres
Within the true believer's paradise."

"Thou touchest on a point important, here,
And knowest not that, in that loss of Self,
For which thou dost commiserate the soul
That life's afflictive bonds can bind no more,

Lies all the secret of its ecstasy.
Is life foregone—its separate life and thought,
In which the pang did overcrowd the joy,
And disappointment blight the springing hope,
Evil defile the purpose willed to good,
And vile expediency did prostitute
Its highest faculties to ways of men—
So great a boon it should be carried on,
Perpetuated through eternity?
Its vast capacity for anguish deep,
Imperious loves, that satisfaction cloy,
But that denial into frenzy turns,
And that bereavement into hopelessness
And blank despair, a cataclysm, sweeps;
Its stormy passions, its illusive hopes,
Its yearnings, that fulfillment never reach,
Are wires that keep from home the captive
soul,
In durance held to Self's propensities.
Ambitions gild and expectations deck,
Like gold that in its thinnest leaf is spread,
And some flamboyant ribbon that doth wave
Its gaudy pennant from the metal thread

Life's draw-plate forms to bound its prison cell;
But spite these gauds, it is a prison still.
And would'st thou ever, like the helpless bird,
Swing to and fro within the vibrant ring
That from joy gravitates again to grief;
Tenure to loss, and mirth to misery;
From bliss to woe, the sport of circumstance?
O, kingdom of the blest, that moveth not
To sight or sound that this discursive life
But shows to flatter, utters to distract,
I fain would hasten up, from height to height
That ever rises to a loftier plane
Of increased power that from experience grows
To put Self's requisitions under foot;
Resist, and long not, while I yet resist,
For crown that their indulgence offereth;
Climb, climb o'er death and its recurrent life,
(My own and that of all unto me dear,)
Until with pulse becalmed I enter in
To where no trasport e'er can quicken it,
And no distress can slow its measured throb;
Where 'no desire that hath an earthly strain'
Hath power to make its paltry presence felt;

Hath speech to urge unrest upon the soul,
Nirvana bathes in a complete repose."

"And dost thou call the thing thou namest, *Life?*
The gilded cage that holds the captive bird?
That is the wire-hedged school of discipline
In which his fretted search for liberty
Through love, and hope, and pleasure, doth increase,
As disappointment on it follows close,
The sweetness of the melody he sings;
Brings in the minor chord of higher hope,
Whose very longing as a surety stands,
That when, with chill white hand, the messenger
Of death shall touch and set the bars apart,
His upward course shall soar amid the stars,
And the wide fields of ether be his home.
The wing was made to beat the boundless air;
Its quill and covert for a purposed flight;
And every frantic longing of man's soul
That goads him on, some promised goal to reach,
His hopes have whispered shall with sweet reward
Of lasting satisfaction crown his quest,
Which, having reached, of narrow scope he finds,

And joy too poor its depths to satisfy,
Is frame of wing that yet shall be unfurled
To waft him to delights unchangeable.
Like Iris' is the mission of his want
And colors of the rainbow it combines;
It sets a promise in life's clouded sky
Of life to come that shall not know a cloud.
The darkest shadow witnesses of light;
Woe testifies felicity supreme;
And Christ through his triumphant death has
brought
To light true life and immortality.
This beautiful and bright antithesis
Against thy theory of good I set.
Thy 'Mind Supreme' doth by destruction bless;
My Savior purifies to holiness!
Thou dost with stoic will thy thirst repress;
Mine shall be quenched in the broad boundlessness
Of life's refreshing stream, which, unconfined,
Flows o'er the plains of everlasting bliss.
Thy loves are slain to bring thy spirit peace,
But mine unto His bosom with me go;
Of all their pangs and stings there dispossessed,

Shall on me look with eyes in which I see
The tender light of human memory.
Not famine weakens power of sin to slay,
But full experience of diviner joy.
Thy nature's worthy of a loftier hope;
Thy morals seem to have a wholesome look;
Thy meek endurance speaks of fortitude;
But thou dost need to study God anew,
And to him higher attributes ascribe."

"Give space a moment! Let me know the name
By which to call thee."

"'Tis enough to know
I but a weary earthly pilgrim am."

"Then, pilgrim, there is mystery in *thy* creed,
By which the '*one pure spark*' of which thou
speak'st

Was made to bear man's penalty for sins,
And through whose substitution for himself
Man shall be blest. Explain it, thou—this plan
By which to dodge a punishment deserved,
And to thyself an unearned bliss secure."

"Yes ; there is mystery. This book proclaims
'Of godliness the mystery is great.'

Thou say'st well when thou stoutly dost declare
Effect of good or evil follows cause.

Christ's substitution satisfies God's law,
And takes away the penalty it claims
From man for disobedience thereto.

Results that follow sin in sequent chain
Of *earthly* evils, must, *as such*, be borne.

But if, through faith, acceptance has been made
Of that he wrought to free us from the sin,
Then from our souls its soil is washed away,
And in God's sight we have been justified.

No Savior having thou, the sin remains ;
Not only such results as touch the world,
But those that do affect the spirit life.

For, if imperfect, and no help thou hast,
Not Deity, nor Demon, but thyself

Thy sole and only Providence, how hope
To satisfy a law which doth demand
Compliance so complete, a perfect man
With its conditions only can comply ?

I know not how the matter thou explain 'st,

But thou dost know at variance man stands
With every high ideal perfection hath;
And save that his 'infirmities' have help,
How shall his wayward spirit e'er espouse
Or e'en desire that they become his own?
Thou speak'st of struggle 'gainst the lower life,
But what shall gird to conflict and give strength,
To worst the enemy his own soul loves,
If from some influence higher than himself,
The courage comes not; if himself alone,
Not Deity, nor Demon, but himself,
Doth constitute his only Providence?"

"His will—"

"Alas! what's weaker than man's will?"

"But pilgrim, if *award* that is not thine
Be, from thy substitute, to thee transferred,
Thy *duties* thou may'st claim in him fulfilled,
And moral chaos 'whelm the universe."

"There art thou wrong. He only doth perform
The thing I could not do; but having done,

He does demand of me, in the new strength
His grace and mercy to my soul impart,
Fulfillment of each duty life declares.
But to what virtue did thy words allude
As that which overcometh evil's reign?"

"Unselfishness; that virtue which o'ercomes
The baser passions of the human heart,
Obliterating envy, malice, pride,
And all uncharitable thought, whence springs
Forth peculation, murder, every crime
Dishonoring and disgracing human kind;
An altruism not of name, but deed."

"Nay, now thou speak'st a language that I know.
Christian commandment runs to this effect,
That thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
The Being I adore, himself did die
For love of them that shed his sacred blood,
And from the cross in dying accents cried,
'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.'
Had thy progenitor such gift for man?
Such pure unselfish love did he display?

'Ransom for many' was his life laid down?
There is a virtue in my Savior's blood
That cleanseth whatsoe'er its flow doth touch;
Evokes a sweet and stainless purity,
Like the white flower by crimson juices fed
That springs from Sanguinaria's bloody root.
Nay, let me tell thee that there can not be
An altruistic sacrifice, like his,
Of pure unselfishness, from lives forlorn
Revolving ever 'round their own weak selves;
Forever struggling with inherent sins
And striving, ceaselessly, escape to make
From pits of clay whose mire still holds them fast,
With no God reaching down to set them free."

"Dost thou delight to think man, then, so weak,
He has within him no o'ercoming power?"

"I do delight to think he is God's child,
Forgotten never in the sorry strife
With misery and with sin he's called to wage.
For I do know—delight it me or not—
That human nature can not overcome

Save He doth help to make the victory sure.
How canst thou glory in a God like thine,
Who throws thee off and leaves thee to thyself,
Not pure and strong like him emitting thee,
But somehow, in the process, changed, made vile?
Leaves thee to life and death that follows it,
And life that reappears, with death in turn,
Through ages, thy perfection to attain?
If thy *beginning* thou couldst have obtained
From other source, then would thy fate proceed
All independent of that 'Mind Supreme,'
From first to last; but as it comes to thee
Alone through him, far better had it been
If from himself he'd ne'er emitted thee.
Supreme and glorious thou may'st call his name,
But He I worship has a title sweet —
O Father holy; Elder Brother dear!—
And blest, on which his children rest their hopes,
Of help on earth, through *one brief being* here,
And then immortal bliss beyond the tomb.
I joy to think that I *created* was,
And that my life in Him, eternally,
Will be that of an entity that lives

And loves, and follows out the loftiest trend
Of individual hope, desire, and will.
Leave thy communings with thyself, and look
To Him who can a happier prospect show!
Thy theories are false, and all the light
That in thee is, is darkness most profound.
Theosophy; to thy high name look up!
For he alone is wise in things of God,
Who cometh humbly as a little child,
And casts the sins and burdens of his life,
And all things that perplex or make afraid,
On Jesus, who has died that he might live."

And, as she spake, before her growing dim,
And dimmer, as she gazed, the sage's face
She, in amazement, saw fade from her sight;
Merge in a vaporous cloud of golden haze,
That seemed to spread and deepened as it grew.
All things receded, vanished in its glow,
Which wrapped the universe, and held it bound
In radiant encompassing embrace;
So radiant that it touched the pilgrim's eyes
With sense of an excess that smote with pain.

She moved, put up her hands, and lo, behold !
'Twas but the sunlight on her eyelids fell,
As, by Auroral messengers proclaimed,
And heralded along the eastern skies,
Up steeps of pearly gray with pink o'erflushed,
Came Phœbus forth, to steer his chariot's course,
And shed effulgence on another day.

Upon the grass the dew still glittering lay ;
The birds sang morning carols in the trees.
Before her stretched the pilgrim's thoroughfare,
As barren, blank, and drear as yesterday ;
But to her dazzled eyes the way seemed changed.
They viewed it not as road for a forced march,
But avenue of opportunity,
Where, on the pilgrimage, her lips might speak,
Perchance, to counteract some grave mistake
Of fellow-pilgrim on the toilsome route.
The vanished vision of the night was sent,
Through Dreams and Fancies, angels in disguise,
She mused, to show her mission and her work,
And why, though desolate, she yet remained,
A lonely pilgrim, on the journey home.

O, that she might be worthy, in His name,
To guide some soul from error to the right!
She clasped the Bible to her throbbing breast,
Turned from life's flowery uplands with no sigh,
Thought not of graves, the long green graves she
loved,

But of their tenants' heavenly ecstasy.
And forth she stepped into the weary way,
Her footsteps keeping measure with the strain
Of joy so sweetly singing through her heart.
"O, Christ! Dear Christ! I cast my all on thee!
O bliss! O bliss! I do believe on thee!
Of whate'er else deprived my life may be,
It hath this blessedness of faith in thee!"

And on she went beneath the beating sun,
And the great cross its shadow o'er her flung,
Its scarlet lilies dropping ruddy dew
That soothed and cooled and strengthened all her soul.
She raised to heaven eyes patient and serene,
Filled with the restful light of chastened trust,
And with her trembling lips she murmured low,
"I am so glad to serve another day!"

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